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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/21): PALESTINIANS: POWERFUL  
WEST DECLINES TO COMBAT RACISM

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Main Stories:  
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Al-Quds leads with news of participants walking out on the Iranian President's address at the Durban UN Anti-Racism conference in Geneva on April 20. The paper's lead photo shows Ahmadinejad giving his speech. Separate front page coverage in Al-Quds cites DPA in reporting on reaction by French President Sarkozy who called the statements "provocative." Similar coverage runs on Al Ayyam's front page, with photo and inside Al-Hayyat Al-Jadida. All coverage notes the UN Secretary General's comments expressing his disappointment with Ahmadinejad's speech.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida leads with the Palestinian Authority President Abbas' visit to Abu Dhabi on April 20, where he met with Prince Mohammad Al-Nhayyan. According to coverage that also appears on Al-Quds' front page, the meeting focused on bilateral relations, the political situation in the Palestinian Territories, Palestinian unity talks and Gaza reconstruction efforts.

Al-Ayyam leads with reports about Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's willingness to pursue unconditional talks with Palestinians. The report quotes Netanyahu stating that recognition of Israel as a Jewish state is not a precondition for negotiations. The report also quotes Israeli Defense Minister Barak noting that Israel must be ready to accept a comprehensive settlement to the conflict that will include the establishment of a Palestinian State living in peace with Israel. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's front page coverage adds statements by Netanyahu stressing that though it is not a precondition, the recognition of Israel remains integral to making progress in the peace talks.

All front pages report on the weekly Palestinian Authority(PA) ministerial cabinet meeting chaired by PA Premier Fayyad on April 20

in Ramallah. According to coverage, participants applauded Muslims and Palestinians for preventing "Israeli extremist Jewish groups" from breaking into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem at the end of Passover. The Cabinet also condemned Israeli action that prevented worshipers from attending Easter services at the Holy Sepulcher Church in Jerusalem. The Cabinet further condemned the April 19 attack against Hamas leader Al-Bitawi in Nablus. Fayyad stressed in comments to the press that he is fully engaged in enforcing the rule of law in the West Bank. Finally the Cabinet welcomed the recent Human Rights Watch report that criticized Israeli military action in the recent conflict in Gaza and Hamas attacks on Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.

Al-Quds' front page cites Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth, in reporting about continued rocket attacks from Gaza on southern Israel. Israel is expected to pursue targeted assassinations against Hamas leaders in Gaza, according to coverage. Reporting also notes that Israeli Premier Netanyahu is preparing for the April 22 visit of Egyptian Intelligence Chief Sulayman during which he will explore Egyptian mediation on indirect talks with Hamas to secure the release of captured Israeli soldier Shalit.

Al-Quds runs front page coverage of a "U.S. analytical report" on the future of Israeli-American relations given disagreement in recent official statements regarding the Palestinian- Israeli conflict and the two-state solution. The report outlines a number

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of steps that the U.S. could take to force Israeli acceptance of the two-state solution, including cuts in economic assistance. The steps, according to the report, should be coupled with international pressure on Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to, "take a more effective role."

In economic news, Al-Quds' inside page reports on a signed agreement between the Palestinian and Qatari Red Crescent Societies to provide \$750,000 to reconstruct Al-Quds Hospital in Gaza that was badly damaged in the recent conflict with Israel. In other financial news, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's front page reports 3,870 Gaza families benefitting from the World Bank-funded social security network will receive payments on April 21. According to Palestinian Authority Minister for Social Affairs Habbash, payments were delayed a month because of a, "lack of financial liquidity in Gaza banks."

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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1) Al-Quds independent daily runs an editorial under the title, "Why do they decline to combat racism?"(04/21): "Israel has been occupying the Palestinian Territories since the year 1967...yet the anti-racism conference confirms that some parties, not only in Israel, but also in powerful Western countries, do not want to criticize [Israel]... therefore, we do not expect conference decisions to change anything on the ground... still the conference constitutes a call on international public opinion to address the many problems [of racism] faced by people all over the world..."

2) Regular columnist Rajab Abu Sirriyah opines in Al-Ayyam daily independent under the title, "An alternative regional solution to the two-state solution"(04/21): "It may be possible that Netanyahu's sudden change and openness to pursuing negotiations with Palestinians without the precondition of recognizing Israel is due to the clear insistence of the U.S. administration on the two-state solution. This means that Netanyahu is not in favor of entering into an early conflict with the U.S. Democratic administration...although his alternate initiative is only a way to waste time and increase division among Arab countries"

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